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SOME INDIRECT RETURNS FROM FORESTRY

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A radio talk by Mr. L. F. Theipp, Forest Service, delivered through Station WRC and 39 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, January 14, 1931.

In the United States forestry is scarcely a third of a century old. It came into being at a time when timber utilization was the foundation of a great industrial structure upon which many States, Counties, and communities were vitally dependent for their continued existence. This industry had been developed under pioneer conditions where the employment of the natural resources for the development of social and political institutions, the quick liquidation of readily marketable natural assets, was deemed essential to economic growth, regardless of the waste and ugly destruction of natural beauty which followed in its course.

Foresters could not arbitrarily change the situation over night. The agencies with which they had to deal were concerned primarily with quick financial returns, and neither recognized nor accepted the indirect public values of forests as major considerations of forest management. Because they necessarily adapted themselves to existing industrial and economic circumstances, foresters came to be regarded as largely materialistic and mercenary in their point of view.

But such a conclusion would be unfair to foresters. While they yielded temporarily to circumstances, they had always before them the ultimate objective of true forestry, of principles of forest land management through which such lands would yield the highest possible social returns, esthetic and inspirational as well as material. They looked forward to the time when forest utilization would leave the cutover lands more thrifty and productive than they had been before, and after short intervals of time more beautiful and of higher recreational and inspirational quality. They envisioned the time when each forest would be placed upon a sustained yield basis, when cutting would proceed compartment by compartment in definite and systematic programs through which there would be a minimum disturbance of the other forest values. They foresaw the time when the inevitable slash and debris of logging operations would quickly be eliminated after cutting, when the denuded or depleted areas would be quickly reforested either naturally or by planting, when the productive capacity of the forest lands would be permanently safeguarded by selective cutting, when the communities dependent upon forest utilization would become permanent and beautiful and capable of providing men and women with all the essentials of a well rounded out existence, rather than temporary and ugly and deficient in social opportunities.

The long sustained efforts of foresters have borne surprising fruit. I would not have you believe the millennium has arrived, that forestry is now a generally accepted and applied practice over all timber producing

(over)

lands, or that all of the defects of earlier days have been eliminated. But it safely can be asserted that most encouraging progress has been made and that the forestry of today and of the future constitutes a distinct advance over the forestry of the past and holds out definite promise of ultimately redeeming all social and economic obligations of the lands chiefly valuable for timber production.

Under the new order which rapidly is taking form, the social and economic values of forests are no longer restricted exclusively to the production of timber supplies and the protection of watersheds. Other values, which though termed "intangible" are actually very real, daily assume a newer and larger importance. They are the so-called "social" values, inspirational, esthetic, recreational, wild life, natural, and so on. There already is a large part of our people who regard these social values as far more important than the production of timber or livestock, and who feel that as time goes on they frequently will dominate the Nation's program of forest management. And it is easy to see why such a feeling so widely exists.

Modern artists, blending their skill, their imagination and their social sense, now frequently picture the cities in which the people of the United States will in the future live and work and have their being. Dwelling places and workshops will tower into the skies, architectural masterpieces bewildering in their symmetry of form, and beauty of color and decoration. Within these cities daily existence will attain standards of comfort, ease and hygiene far surpassing present-day conceptions. Mechanical servants will multiply in numbers and functions, and life will become increasingly a matter of quick mental coordination and reaction rather than of physical effort.

But in this new environment the dominant note will be the achievement of men rather than the work of the Creator. The consequent detachment from close association with the myriad manifestations of nature will create in our future citizens spiritual hunger which will have to be satisfied, and men and women will turn more and more to the natural sources of inspiration and pleasure through which the tension of their mechanized existence can be relaxed and their physical and mental faculties truly recreated. This is no visionary statement; in our larger cities this condition already exists in quite striking degree and is recognized by progressive foresters as a major factor which hereafter largely must influence their plans of forest land management.

The beauties of sea, lake and river shores, the free sweep of fields and great open treeless spaces, all will have their part in meeting future conditions of existence. But it will be to the forests, with their beauty, their mysticism, their romance, their widely varied manifestations of nature, their age-old appeal, that coming generations largely will turn so that they may accomplish that balance between natural and mechanized modes of life which will be essential to a full flowering civilization and culture.

The more detached from nature that men and women will become the more will they truly appreciate and love it. They will wish to enjoy more and more the contact with and study of plant and animal life which in fullest degree is found within the forests.

Foresters are now keenly alive to the growing social and economic importance of these indirect returns from forestry. The Federal Forest Service already recognizes it in providing for the millions of people who seek outdoor recreation on the national forests, and in setting aside certain primitive areas to be kept forever in their wild, natural state. The production of the largest volume of timber in the least time and at the lowest expense will always, of course, be a prime purpose of forest management, but coordinate with that purpose and frequently transcending it will be also the purpose of deriving from the forests for the use and enjoyment of the people of the United States the largest practicable degree of inspirational, educational, and recreational service, so that all of the people of this great and growing Nation may draw from its forests renewed appreciation of nature, of life and of the homeland.

